

However, the main problem was missed opportunities. And missed opportunities are lost victories, for which you have to pay with soldiers' lives.

Let's go back to October 1943. The troops of the then Kalinin Front achieve significant tactical success - they capture Nevel. As a result, the entire German defense system in the sector of the 16th Army is disrupted. The Germans begin a disorderly retreat along the Velikiye Luki-Nevel-Vitebsk highway. In the current situation, the Soviet command could only throw mobile tank-mechanized groups into the pursuit of the enemy. Their task would be simple: not to give the Germans the opportunity to gain a foothold, to put their troops in order, not to allow them to hold back our offensive and organize a solid defense. Such mobile groups were created in reality. But they all had one common

drawback: they consisted of no more than a company of tanks and a battalion of motorized infantry. Therefore, they were easily broken by German tank barriers. Already mentioned above, Otto Carius in the battles near Nevel commanded a platoon of "tigers". In his memoirs, he describes in detail the clashes with Russian mobile groups. The largest of them numbered seventeen tanks. It is clear that with such a balance of forces, nothing came of pursuing the retreating German troops. The Germans, without much interference, occupied a new defensive line and paralyzed the further advance of the Soviet advancing units.

A similar situation took place in January 1944 on the Leningrad front. The troops of General Govorov took Gatchina. The German command had nothing to close the vast gap in its defenses. The retreating troops moved randomly along the Leningrad-Narva highway. Again, they were pursued by Soviet mobile groups. Otto Carius with his "tigers" was transferred to the area west of Gatchina to cover the withdrawal of the main forces. Again, he fought with Russian tank-mechanized formations raiding on the flanks of the German troops. According to him, the actions of the enemy posed a real threat: "The withdrawal of the troops of the Army Group North to a large extent disrupted the actions of the Russians from the flanks. The road they followed

the retreating units became more and more overloaded with troops pushing against each other, as the enemy increasingly blocked this route. We always had to ensure free passage ... One night the Russians even managed to surround the divisional command post. It was not difficult for us to overturn them, since the Russians carried out their flank maneuvers with mobile units, that is, motorized infantry, with light anti-tank guns and light tanks . division! However, the prospects were much wider. Let us recall how in the summer of 1941 German tanks on the shoulders of our retreating troops broke into the fortified areas on the old border and thus opened their way to Leningrad, Smolensk and Kyiv. In January 1944, our Leningrad Front had a very real opportunity to take Narva on the move in a very similar way and to slip through the northern front of the Panther line without a

fight. Moreover, at that moment, engineering work was really just beginning and there were no serious obstacles for Soviet tanks on the Narva Isthmus yet. Then it remained only to destroy the German rear, cut communications and supply lines. What an extremely bad situation Army Group North would have found itself in! Soviet tanks could move to Riga and go to the rear of the Pskov-Sebezh fortified area, providing a breakthrough to the Baltic states for the troops of Bagramyan and Popov. And our army would not have had to bother with the enemy grouping in Courland until February 1945. But this would significantly improve the initial conditions of the East Prussian and Vistula-Oder

For conducting
offensive operations.

No, the author did not have an ardent creative imagination at all. The mistakes of the winter campaign were taken into account and corrected by the Soviet command during the July offensive of 1944. Here is what S.M. wrote about this. Shtemenko: "We did not rule out that the fascist German command might evade the blow brought over its 16th Army and try to meet the Soviet troops somewhere in the depths. In anticipation of such an option in 1-

mobile groups were created in advance in the shock and 54th armies. At Zakhvataev, the mobile group included one rifle regiment of the 85th division, the 16th tank brigade and the 724th self-propelled artillery regiment. At Roginsky, the mobile group consisted of the 288th Infantry Division and the 122nd Tank Brigade ... The mobile groups immediately began pursuing the enemy ... The troops were instructed not to stop pursuing the enemy at night. By midnight, the mobile group of the 4th Army captured the important Krasnogorodskoye road junction and did not allow the enemy rearguards to gain a foothold at the turn of the Sinyaya River "[195] . I wonder if the mobile group of the 54th Army could have driven the Germans from the line of the Blue River if it had consisted of a motorized infantry battalion and two dozen tanks? And what prevented the command of the Leningrad Front from throwing a couple of tank brigades and regiments of self-propelled artillery against the retreating enemy in January 1944? Finally, it is interesting to consider

another possibility. February 1944. The Germans entrenched themselves on the Panther line. As mentioned above, the General Staff developed a plan that involved dispersing the enemy's forces in several directions and crushing his defenses. Undoubtedly, this idea was correct. But its actual execution resulted in the dissipation of our own forces. The Germans, on the other hand, maneuvered their reserves precisely in the directions of the main attacks of the Soviet troops.

Meanwhile, there was another way of realizing the idea of the General Staff officers, which was correct in principle. A path that really misled the Germans and forced them not only to spray, but also to waste their forces. The Panther line ran along the rivers Narva and Velikaya. They had to capture several bridgeheads. In this case, the Germans were faced with the need to take appropriate preventive measures, since any of the bridgeheads could be used by the Soviet troops as a springboard for making a deep breakthrough. But which one? This question would become for the German command an equation with many unknowns. Around each bridgehead, troops would have to be concentrated and defenses prepared. But such a passive path did not bode well for the future. The best solution is

attack bridgeheads, drive the Russians back to the left bank. In this case, our troops would change with the German places. Not ours, but German soldiers would have been killed in frontal attacks. This is what sprayed and would weaken the forces of the enemy. The Soviet troops, on the other hand, would have retained their main forces. The experience of the Leningrad Front showed that much fewer troops were required to capture the bridgehead than to storm Idritsa. And the Germans, willy-nilly, had to attack. Moreover, in February the rivers were ice-bound and such a risky operation as forcing was not required. In the future, one of the bridgeheads could be used for an offensive. In July 1944, such a decision was

actually made. Especially for the strike from the Strezhnevsky bridgehead on the right bank of the Velikaya Stavka River, the 3rd Baltic Front was formed. On July 17, from this bridgehead, the 1st shock and 54th armies went on the offensive and successfully broke through the enemy's defenses. In general, nothing prevented us from acting in a similar way four months earlier, instead of uselessly ruining the troops in the frontal assaults on Idritsa and Sebezh. The lost opportunities to defeat Army Group North in the

winter of 1944 had an extremely negative impact on the further actions of the Soviet troops. The German grouping in the Baltic continued to hold out until the spring of 1945, representing a headache for the Supreme, and for the Headquarters, and for the General Staff. Stalin constantly feared a blow in the back from the unfinished Army Group North. It diverted to itself significant of our forces, which could be involved in the Berlin direction. With good reason, it can be argued that the threat of a stab in the back seriously held back the advance of Soviet troops in Poland and East Prussia and thus delayed the end of the war for at least six months. It's sad, but it's a fact. Of course, the reality of a stab in the back is debatable. CM. Shtemenko categorically asserts that "the need

to destroy the enemy in the Baltics had acquired particular urgency by this time." Our troops advanced far to the west, and leaving the enemy a strategic foothold in their rear was unacceptable. This opinion is supported by G.K. Zhukov and AM

Vasilevsky, who are considered the main military authorities. But even they admit that the protracted hostilities in the Baltic states forced the Soviet command to look back and affected the results of the offensive operations of our troops during the winter-spring campaign of 1945.

Chapter

13 We took Warsaw with a fight

In the summer of 1944, our troops were preparing for the final expulsion of the Nazi invaders from Russian soil. The Germans, with the despair of the doomed, clung to every kilometer of the territory still remaining in their hands. By mid-June, the Soviet-German front was passing along the line Narva-Pskov-Vitebsk-Krichev-Mozyr-Pinsk-Brody-Kolomiya-Iasi-Dubossary-Dniester Estuary. On the southern sector of the front, hostilities were already taking place beyond the state border, on the territory of Romania. Both opposing sides, using an approximately two-month operational pause, were intensively preparing for the summer campaign. On May 20, 1944, the General Staff completed the development of

the plan for the Belarusian offensive operation. She entered the operational documents of the Headquarters under the code name "Bagration". The troops were tasked with the complete defeat of Army Group Center.

The configuration of the front line in Belarus was a huge arc extended to the east with an area of almost 250 thousand square kilometers. It stretched from Vitebsk in the north and Pinsk in the south to the Smolensk and Gomel regions, hanging over the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front. In this arc, the main forces of Army Group Center were concentrated, which included the 3rd Panzer, 2nd, 4th and 9th armies. The Soviet General Staff officers called this sector of the front the "Belarusian salient".

Since the Belarusian ledge covered the distant approaches to the General Government [Poland], and the outpost of the Great German Reich - East Prussia, the German command sought to keep it at all costs and attached great importance to the creation of a powerful, long-term defense in it. The main defensive line ran along the Vitebsk-Orsha-Mogilev-Rogachev-Bobruisk line. The areas of Vitebsk and Bobruisk, which were the flanks of Army Group Center, were especially strongly fortified. In the operational depth there were URs built along the banks of the rivers

Dnieper, Drut and Berezina. The Germans turned large cities into strong centers of resistance with long-term firing points equipped in them. Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, Bobruisk, Borisov and Minsk were declared "fortresses" by Hitler's special order.

Nevertheless, the General Staff believed that the main blow, which would decide the fate of the entire summer campaign, should be inflicted in Belarus. The developed operational plan was based on the idea of breaking through the enemy's defenses on the flanks, developing the offensive in converging directions and capturing Minsk. Thus, the authors of the plan expected to close the ring around 38 German divisions of the first echelon, concentrated east of the capital of Belarus. This put Army Group Center on the brink of actual annihilation. Moreover, the successful implementation of the plan of the operation "Bagration" made it possible to solve a number of other, no less strategically important tasks.

1. Completely clear the Moscow direction from enemy troops, since the front edge of the ledge was 80 kilometers from Smolensk;
2. Complete the liberation of the entire territory of Belarus;
3. Go to the coast of the Baltic Sea and to the borders of East Prussia, which made it possible to cut the enemy's front at the junctions of Army Groups "Center" and "North" and isolate these German groups from each other;

4. To create favorable operational and tactical prerequisites for subsequent offensive operations in the Baltic states, in Western Ukraine, in the East Prussian and Warsaw directions.

To conduct Operation Bagration, the Headquarters planned to use the troops of four fronts. As part of the prepared measures, the Western Front on April 24, 1944 was renamed the 3rd Belorussian Front, and the 2nd Belorussian Front was formed from the armies of its left wing operating in the Mogilev direction. On May 31, the Headquarters approved the final version of the plan and sent it to the troops in the form of a directive.

The main role in the upcoming offensive was assigned to the 1st Belorussian Front under the command of K.K. Rokossovsky. Before his troops, the task was to bring down the right flank of the Germans,

to defeat the Zhlobino-Bobruisk grouping and, having introduced mobile tank-mechanized formations into battle, how quickly it is possible to advance towards Slutsk and Baranovichi, covering the main forces of Army Group Center from the south and south-west in an arc east of Minsk. In pursuance of this task, General of the Army Rokossovsky created two strike groups. The first was to strike north of Rogachev, break into the enemy defenses and make a deep breakthrough, dropping the opposing German troops into a bag. It included the 3rd Army of Lieutenant General AB Gorbатов, the 48th Army of Lieutenant General P.L. Romanenko and the 9th Tank Corps of Major General B.S. Bakharova. The second

strike group attacked south of Parichi, closing the ring around the German troops in the Bobruisk region from the south and developing the offensive on Minsk. This grouping consisted of the 65th Army under the command of Lieutenant General P.I. Batov, the 28th Army under the command of Lieutenant General AA Luchinsky and the 1st Guards Tank Corps, commanded by Major General M.F. Panov.

Rokossovsky had a special responsibility on his shoulders. The nature of the terrain in the zone of the 1st Belorussian Front was extremely unfavorable, and not only the German, but also the Soviet high command considered a large-scale offensive here impossible. Even at the stage of developing the plan of the operation, Stalin and other members of the Stavka asked Rokossovsky the question: how is he going to strike with two tank corps and four combined arms armies through continuous, impenetrable swamps? That's exactly what the Germans think, answered the front commander. They don't expect our strike from here. Therefore, their defense is not continuous, but focal, that is, easily vulnerable, which actually predetermines success. As you know,

Stalin twice offered Rokossovsky to reconsider the decision. And was unpleasantly surprised by his perseverance. The Supreme Commander sent Zhukov and Bulganin to keep an eye on the overconfident general. The first was appointed to coordinate the actions of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian fronts, the second became a member of the Military Council at Rokossovsky's headquarters.

2nd Belorussian Front, commanded by Colonel General G.F. Zakharov, performed auxiliary functions. The meaning of the attack of his left wing on Mogilev was the need to tie down the enemy forces and prevent him from withdrawing troops from this direction to strengthen the Zhlobino-Bobruisk grouping. The second auxiliary strike was planned by the right wing of the front to Orsha in order to assist the neighbors in defeating the strong Vitebsk-Orsha group of Germans. The 2nd Belorussian could develop the offensive only after decisive successes were achieved by neighboring fronts. Therefore, there were few troops in its composition - the 49th, 33rd and 59th armies. And General Zakharov was even more "lucky" than Rokossovsky: Stalin appointed Comrade Mekhlis L.3 as a member of the Military Council to him. By the Directive of the Stavka of May 31,

1944, the responsible task of crushing the left flank of Army Group Center was set before the 3rd Belorussian Front. A commander was appointed to match the task - Colonel General I.D. Chernyakhovsky. The main blow of the 3rd Belorussian Front was to be delivered in cooperation with the left wing of the Baltic Front and the right wing of the 2nd Belorussian Front on Vitebsk in order to defeat the Vitebsk-Orsha enemy grouping. Like Rokossovsky, two strike groups were created here to accomplish this task. The first, as part of the 39th Army under the command of Lieutenant General I.I. Lyudnikov, 5th Army Lieutenant General M.I. Krylov, the 28th, 153rd and 2nd Guards Tank Brigades were to make a breakthrough north and south of Vitebsk. At the same time, the 39th Army, together with the troops of the 1st Baltic Front, had the task of capturing Vitebsk. The 5th Army bypassed the city from the south and advanced through Bogushevsk, Senno, Lukomol to the upper reaches of the Berezina. The second strike group consisted of the 11th Guards Army, Lieutenant General

K.N. Galitsky, 1st Army Lieutenant General V.V. Glagolev, 120th and 213th tank brigades. Its mobile troops were tasked with taking Orsha and developing an offensive along the Minsk highway to Borisov. Further, units of the second echelon of the front were to be brought into action: the 5th Guards Tank Army, the 2nd Guards Tank Tatsinsky, the 3rd Guards Mechanized and the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps.

1st Baltic Front under the command of General of the Army I.Kh. Bagramyan at the first stage of the Belarussian operation ensured, in cooperation with the 3rd Belorussian Front, the defeat of the enemy's Vitebsk-Orsha grouping. Further, his troops should have crossed the Western Dvina, captured Lepel and developed an offensive against Polotsk. The task of breaking through the German defenses at the junction of the 16th Army of the North Army Group and the 3rd Panzer Army of the Center Army Group was assigned to the shock fist in the 6th Guards Army, Lieutenant General I.M. Chistyakov, 43rd Army Lieutenant General A.P. Beloborodov and the

1st Tank Corps, Lieutenant General V. Budakov. According to the calculations of the General Staff, to ensure the operation "Bagration" it was necessary to send 400 thousand tons of ammunition, 300 thousand tons of fuel and lubricants, 500 thousand tons of food and fodder to the troops. In addition, an additional operational plan provided for the transfer of 5 combined arms armies, two tank and one air armies, as well as the 1st Army of the Polish Army to the area of the upcoming offensive. This is not counting the Headquarters reserves advanced to the front line - 5 separate tank, 2 mechanized and 4 cavalry corps, dozens of separate regiments and brigades of all types of troops [196]. Such a large-scale transportation of troops and

military cargo required extensive measures to disinform the enemy. According to Soviet intelligence, the OKW considered the most likely general offensive of the Red Army in the south. From the territory of Ukraine and Romania, our troops could well deliver a powerful blow both to the rear of Army Group Center and to the precious oil fields of Ploiesti for the Reich. Based on these considerations, the German command concentrated its main forces in the south, assuming in Belarus only local operations of a fettering nature. The General Staff strengthened the Germans in every possible way in this opinion. The enemy was shown that most of the Soviet tank armies "remain" in Ukraine. In the central sector of the front, feverish engineering work was carried out during daylight hours to create false defensive lines in front of the Belorussian ledge. The Germans bought in and increased the number of their troops in Ukr

On June 22, 1944, on the day of the third anniversary of the start of the Great Patriotic War, reconnaissance in force was carried out in the sectors of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian fronts. The commanders in this way specified the location of enemy firing points on the front line and spotted the positions of some previously unknown artillery batteries. The final preparations for the general offensive were being made.

On the morning of June 3, powerful artillery preparation, accompanied by pinpoint air strikes, opened the Belarusian operation of the Red Army. The first to attack were the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Belorussian and 1st Baltic fronts. Rokossovsky's front struck the main blow the next

day. The first day of the battle showed that the advance of our troops was uneven. So, the 4th shock army of the 1st Baltic Front, advancing on Verkhnedvinsk, failed to overcome the enemy's defenses, and its result was limited to 5–6 kilometers recaptured. On the other hand, the 6th Guards and 43rd Armies succeeded in breaking through and bypassing Vitebsk from the northwest. They broke through the German defenses to a depth of 15 kilometers and opened the way for the 1st Panzer Corps. The 39th and 5th armies of the 3rd Belorussian Front successfully broke through south of Vitebsk, crossed the Luchesa River and continued to advance. Thus, already on the first day, the German group had a small corridor southwest of Vitebsk, only 20 kilometers wide. The adjacent flanks of the 43rd and 39th armies were to link up in the settlement of Ostrovno, slamming the trap behind the enemy. On the Orsha

direction, the 11th Guards and 31st Armies acted unsuccessfully. Here they were opposed by the enemy's powerful defenses in terms of engineering and fire. In January, our troops were already advancing on this sector, but all their attempts to take Orsha ended in failure. The armies of Galitsky and Glagolev broke into the advanced German trenches. Throughout the day on June 23, they made their way to the second line of German defenses. Before the representative of the Stavka AM Vasilevsky, who coordinated the actions of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts, the question arose: in which sector should the 5th Guards Tank Army of General P.A. Rotmistrov? After consulting with the commander of the 3rd

Belorussian front, he decided to wait for success near Orsha. In this case, the 5th Panzer will be able to make a throw directly at Minsk. Good results were shown by the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front. 49th Army Lieutenant General I.T. Grishina successfully overcame the resistance of the Germans in the Mogilev direction and immediately captured a bridgehead on the right bank of the Dnieper.

Complete surprise was achieved in the sector of the 1st Belorussian Front. The strike group operating in the Parichi region, without much interference from the enemy, made a breakthrough to a depth of 20 kilometers. This success allowed General Panov's 1st Guards Tank Corps and General Pliev's cavalry-mechanized group to be put into action immediately. Chasing the rapidly retreating Germans, the mobile units of the 1st Belorussian Front approached Bobruisk the very next day. On June 26, the tankers

of General Bakharov made a breakthrough to Bobruisk. Initially, the troops of the Rogachev strike group encountered fierce enemy resistance. On the first day of the offensive, their advance did not exceed 10 kilometers. Then the commander of the 3rd Army, General Gorbатов, suggested that the front headquarters change the direction of the attack of the 9th Panzer Corps north of Rogachev, where there was a weak link in the German defense. In addition, the rapid success of the offensive in the Parichi region put the German command in front of the threat of encirclement. On the evening of June 25, the Germans began a tactical withdrawal from the Zhlobin-Rogachev line. But it was already too late. The tank corps of Panov and Bakharov by that time had penetrated behind enemy lines. On June 27, the encirclement closed. In the "bag" were parts of the 35th army and 41st tank German corps. Two days earlier,

the troops of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts successfully completed the encirclement of the enemy in the Vitebsk region. The mobile groups of Bagramyan and Chernyakhovsky quickly advanced towards Lepel and Borisov. Vitebsk was taken on 26 June. The next day, the troops of the 11th Guards and 34th Armies finally broke the enemy's resistance and liberated Orsha. On June 28, Soviet tanks were already in Lepel and Borisov. Vasilevsky set the task for the tankers of General Rotmistrov to liberate Minsk by the end of July 2. But it is an honor to be the first to enter the capital of Belarus

fell to the guardsmen of the 2nd Tatsinsky tank corps of General AC Burdeyny. They entered Minsk at dawn on July 3. Around noon, tankers of the 1st Guards Tank Corps of the 1st Belorussian Front made their way to the capital from the southeast. By the end of the day, Rotmistrov's tankers and soldiers of General Gorbato's 3rd Army appeared in Minsk. The main forces of the 4th German army - the 12th, 26th, 35th army, 39th and 41st tank corps - were surrounded to the east of the city. They included more than 100 thousand soldiers and officers. Undoubtedly,

the command of Army Group Center made a number of gross mistakes. First of all, in terms of maneuvering on their own. During the first two days of the Soviet offensive, General Field Marshal Bush had the opportunity to withdraw troops to the Berezina line and thereby avoid the threat of their encirclement and destruction. Here he could create a new line of defense. Instead, the German commander allowed unjustified delay in issuing the order to withdraw. It is likely that Bush was blindly following instructions from Berlin to hold the bulge at all costs. Therefore, the German soldiers, who were surrounded east of Minsk, were doomed. On July 12, the encircled troops capitulated. 40 thousand soldiers and officers, 11 generals - commanders of corps and divisions fell into Soviet captivity. It was a disaster. With the destruction of the 4th Army, a huge gap appeared in the German

front line. The Germans could do nothing to close it. On July 4, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command sent a new directive to the fronts, containing a demand to continue the offensive without stopping. The 1st Baltic Front was to advance in the general direction towards Siauliai, reaching Daugavpils with its right wing and Kaunas with its left. Before the 3rd Belorussian Front, the Headquarters set the task of capturing Vilnius and part of the forces - Lida. The 2nd Belorussian Front was ordered to take

Novogrudok, Grodno and Bialystok. The 1st Belorussian Front developed

the offensive in the direction of Baranovichi, Brest and further to Lublin. At the first stage of the

Belarusian operation, the troops solved the tasks of breaking through the strategic front of the German defense, encircling and destroying flank groups. Therefore, the Headquarters, organizing the interaction of the fronts, planned their strikes against converging

directions. After the successful solution of the tasks of the initial stage of the Belarussian operation, the issues of organizing continuous pursuit of the enemy and maximizing the expansion of breakthrough areas came to the fore. Therefore, the opposite decision was made, that is, instead of converging directions, the blows of the fronts followed diverging directions. Thus, our troops could break into the German front for almost 400 kilometers. Their progress was at breakneck speed. On July 7, hostilities took place on the Vilnius-Baranovichi-Pinsk line. A deep

breakthrough of Soviet troops in Belarus created a threat to Army Group North and Army Group North Ukraine. Favorable prerequisites for an offensive in the Baltic states and Ukraine were evident. The 2nd and 3rd Baltic and 1st Ukrainian fronts began to destroy the German groups opposing them. Their actions were provided by the adjacent flanks of the Bagramyan and Rokossovsky fronts.

But the main events took place in Belarus. On July 18, the Rokossovsky strike group, consisting of the 2nd Guards Tank, 8th Guards, 47th and 69th Armies, as well as the 1st Army of the Polish Army, launched an offensive against Lublin. The city was taken on 23 July. And on the 27th, the advanced units of the 2nd Guards Tank Army reached the Vistula and crossed it on the move in the areas of Magnuszew and Pulawy. The success of the tankers was immediately secured by the rifle units of the 8th Guards Army of General V.I. Chuikov and the 69th Army of General V.Ya. Kolpakchi. Our troops captured two extremely important bridgeheads on the right bank of the Vistula - Magnushevsky and Pulawsky. All enemy counterattacks were repulsed. Before the Red Army opened the way to Germany. About 500 kilometers remained to the border river Oder. The German front in front of Rokossovsky's troops was practically c

On July 29, units of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal I.S., reached the Vistula. Konev. The 3rd Guards Army crossed the river on the move and captured the Sandomierz bridgehead. Following the guards, the 13th army of General N.P. approached the Vistula. Pukhov. To the south, the 1st Guards Tank Army of General M.E. was rapidly advancing. Katukov. In order to strengthen the Soviet grouping on the bridgehead in the Sandomierz region, the 5th Guards Army of General AC was pulled up

Zhadov. And what about the Germans? They couldn't do anything. A huge mass of Soviet troops concentrated on the Berlin direction! But, as G.K. Zhukov: "The German command, having used up its reserves in the Belorussian operation, and then in the Lvov-Sandomierz operation, could not provide adequate resistance to the 1st Ukrainian Front during the crossing of the Vistula. Troops of Marshal I.S. Konev firmly stood on the Sandomierz bridgehead ... The command of the German troops understood the significance of the captured bridgehead in the Berlin direction and did everything to eliminate the Magnushevsky, Pulawy and Sandomierz bridgeheads. But it was already too late. For their part, the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian Fronts concentrated so many forces and resources there that the German troops were unable to push them back across the Vistula . eastern part of Warsaw - Prague. Again, the -

Germans had practically nothing to fend off this blow. As always in a hopeless situation, Hitler called for the help of Field Marshal Model. Bush was thrown out of office and almost court-martialed. But even the "iron field marshal" could not do anything in the current situation. Heinz Guderian in his memoirs painted a terrible picture of the collapse of the German front: "The Russians were advancing non-stop, and their offensive had already affected the Army Group North zone, and by mid-July they reached the line Pinsk - Volkovysk - Grodno - Dunaburg. In the directions of the main attack - to Warsaw through the Vistula and to Riga - the Russians were moving forward and, it seemed, nothing would stop them. Since July 13, they have been attacking Army Group A and occupied the territory up to the Przemysl line - the San Pulawa River on the Vistula. As a result of this offensive, Army Group Center was defeated. We lost 25 divisions ... Field Marshal Model received command of Army Group Center instead of Field Marshal Bush. More precisely, not an army group, but the space where the army group recently was"[198] .

In the last year of the Great Patriotic War in our country, one song appeared on the stage and immediately gained wide popularity. Older people, of course, are well aware of her words:

With a fight they took the city of
Lublin, They passed
the whole city And read the name of the last
street. And the name is such - just a battle word
Warsaw street goes through the city, It
means that we have a road
there, It means that we have a
road there - Varshavskaya street Leads us to the West!

And further:

With a fight we took Warsaw,
We passed the whole
city And read the name of the last street ... To
Berlin!

So, at the end of July 1944, the troops of three Soviet fronts entered the Berlin direction - the 1st Ukrainian, 1st and 2nd Belorussian. The valiant soldiers of General Rokossovsky took Warsaw with a fight. In front of them was, as Guderian put it, "the space where Army Group Center had recently been." Only by August 10, the Germans were able to pull up the 4th SS Panzer Corps to Warsaw. During this time, our troops, which were ordered by the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of July 4, 1944, to advance without stopping, could well pass 150-200 kilometers to the west. And the SS tank corps, which consisted of only three divisions - "Dead Head", "Viking" and the 19th Army, could be scattered in a meeting battle. But after the capture of Warsaw, all three fronts froze in place. And only two months later, in October, our offensive began. Of course, the Germans did not waste time and could thoroughly prepare for it. The unique chance to reach Berlin back in 1944 was lost. Why?

Strachwitz and Bur-Komarovsky

On July 27, 1944, the Headquarters sent new directives to the front commanders. AM Vasilevsky recalled: "The Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts had to go to East Prussia and continue to liberate Poland. At the same time, it was understood that the armies of the 3rd Belorussian Front, having taken Kaunas, would reach the Raseiniai-Suwalki line and securely entrenched themselves there to prepare for entry into the territory of East Prussia from the east, and the armies of the 2nd Belorussian Front, inflicting the main blow on Lomza, Ostrołęka, with the left wing, they will continue the offensive along the Greater Poland Lowland to Międzybóże, while with the main forces they will firmly gain a foothold, in order to then strike at East Prussia from the south, through the Masurian Lake District. The armies of the 1st Belorussian Front were ordered to approach Warsaw and cross the Vistula, strike in a northwestern direction, paralyze the enemy defenses along the Narew and Vistula, and plan an attack on Thorn [Toruń] and Łódź"[199]. That is, in Stavka they were perfectly aware of all the benefits of the situation that had arisen and were going to use them to the fullest

extent. But ... But just at that time an uprising broke out in Warsaw under the leadership of General Bur-Komarovsky. And to be frank, this Polish general confused all the cards not only for the Germans. For the Germans, the uprising posed a great danger, since it took place in the immediate vicinity of the front line and destroyed the rear communications of the 9th German army of General Formann. In Berlin, they were very much afraid, as Guderian recalled, of "indirect cooperation between the rebellious Poles and the approaching Russians." However, Bur-Komarovsky was not even

going to cooperate indirectly with the Russians. G.K. Zhukov, with clearly visible irritation between the lines, wrote in his memoirs: "It was established that the command of the front [1st Belorussian. - Auth.], the command of the 1st Army of the Polish Army was not warned in advance by Bur-Komarovsky about the impending uprising. On his part, no attempts were made to link the performance of the Varsovians with the actions of the 1st Belorussian Front. The command of the Soviet troops learned about the uprising after the fact from local residents who crossed the Vistula ... On the instructions of the Supreme Commander, two paratrooper officers were sent to Bur-Komarovsky to communicate and coordinate actions, but Bur-Komarovsky did not

wished to accept them. To help the rebellious Varsovians, on the instructions of the command of the 1st Belorussian Front, Soviet and Polish troops crossed the Vistula and captured the embankment in Warsaw. However, Bur-Komarovsky again did not undertake

none

attempts

install

With

us

interaction"[200] . ~~Less~~

than a year remained before the collapse of the Third Reich. At the same time, less than two years remained before Winston Churchill's Fulton speech, which became the actual beginning of the Third World War, better known as the Cold War. But even then, in the summer of 1944, the future line of confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, so far invisible, although quite clearly palpable in Moscow, London and Washington, passed through the capital of Poland and through all of Europe. As you know, Churchill hatched plans for the re-establishment of the former Polish state, which a few months after the suppression of the uprising was directly announced at the Yalta Conference. Yes, in August 1944 the German army had not yet left the geopolitical game, but the Cold War was already programming the intentions and actions of future winners and future adversaries.

Here is what Heinz Guderian wrote about this, who cannot be called an ignorant person: "There is no doubt that the insurgent Poles declared loyalty to the Polish government in exile, which was in London, from where they and the Rebels represented the interests received orders. conservative and Western-Soviet Union did not want oriented wing of Polish society. Perhaps the to strengthen them in the event of a successful uprising and the capture of the capital. The Soviets clearly preferred such successes to be achieved by their henchmen - from the Lublin camp. But this is the business of the allies - to sort things out among themselves. For us, it only mattered that the Russians stopped their offensive on the Vistula line, and we got a respite.

[\[201\]](#).

Let's read the last sentence carefully once again... There are many examples where the intervention of politics in the affairs of the military did not benefit the latter. What is in the history of Russia, what is in the history of any other country. To some, all this may seem like an exaggeration or a stretch of the facts. One thing remains indisputable: in the summer of 1944, the Germans could not prevent the withdrawal of the Red Army

to the Oder. In this statement, the author refers to our main military authority, Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov. His "Memoirs and Reflections" contains an exhaustively clear fragment of a conversation with Stalin on July 8, 1944. Here it is: "Then the Supreme Commander asked me:

"Can our troops begin the liberation of Poland and reach the Vistula without stopping, and in what sector can the 1st Polish Army, which has already acquired all the necessary fighting qualities, be brought into action?

"Our troops can not only reach the Vistula," I answered, "but they must also seize good bridgeheads on it in order to ensure further offensive operations in the Berlin direction. As for the Polish 1st Army, it must be aimed at Warsaw. A.I. Antonov fully supported me .

[202] Like this! Not only Zhukov, but also — .

the Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army Antonov, believed that the Red Army would reach the Vistula and capture the bridgeheads in order to go directly to Berlin from them. All this is not fantasy or fiction, since the opinion of Zhukov and Antonov was formalized in the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of July 27, 1944, already mentioned above. I just want to say to Pan Bur Komarovsky: what a song you ruined, you fool! So it turned out that a few days were not enough to aim the 1st Polish Army at Warsaw. It is also appropriate to ask the question: to what extent were the actions of Bur Komarovsky in preparing, frankly, a very hasty and poorly organized uprising, connected with the rapid advance of the Red Army to the capital of Poland? But this is a completely different topic.

There was another good reason that influenced the halt of our offensive along the Vistula line. This time of a military nature. In the summer of 1944, as a result of the brilliant conduct of the Belarusian operation, the possibility of destroying Army Group North became a real possibility. On July 30, the troops of the 43rd Army of General A.P. Beloborodov came to the coast of the Gulf of Riga in the Tukums area. The next day, units of the 51st Army captured Jelgava [Mitava], which was the main corner of communications linking the Baltic states with East Prussia. Army Group North lost

connection with Germany by dry route. To the north-east of the area of our breakthrough were the SS units of the operational group "Narva", the 18th and the main forces of the 16th army, to the west - the rest of the 16th army, to the south - the 3rd tank and other armies of the "Center" group. Between these two German groupings were now the troops of the 1st Baltic

Front. The German command was well aware of the danger of the situation. On August 16, units of the 3rd Panzer Army launched a counterattack in the direction of Tukums. This operation was led by Count von Strachwitz, already known to the reader. The troops of the Army Group "North" carried out a counterattack on Siauliai. Their attack was repulsed. But Strachwitz managed to break through the corridor near Tukums and restore communication with the cut off German troops. This corridor went through Riga. In width, it did not exceed 50 kilometers.

In assessing the consequences of the German breakthrough, our military leaders disagree. CM. Shtemenko thought so: "Although the Courland corridor was narrow, it still allowed the enemy to maneuver forces and, if necessary, withdraw Army Group North to East Prussia by land. The consequences of such a maneuver could be extremely unpleasant: they would significantly complicate the course of our operations in East Prussia and Poland. Of course, such a threat had to be reckoned with. Above, the author spoke in detail about the psychological pressure exerted on the Headquarters by the possibility of a blow in the back from the Baltic states. Therefore, it was impossible to attack Berlin in

the summer of 1944. But A.M. Vasilevsky was of a different opinion. According to his estimates, the German breakthrough near Tukums was an unpleasant event, but the Germans did not gain anything special from this. Because as a result of breaking through the corridor, "an almost 1000-kilometer defensive line of the Nazis arose, stretching from Narva Bay to Lake Peipsi, from Tartu to Lake Vyrtejärve, from there south to the Gauja River, along its upper course through the Vidzeme Upland to the Memele River, then followed a bend to the north-west towards Mitava and Dabala, from where the front line descended south through Zhmud to the East Prussian border ... This is the maximum of what the enemy has achieved here," 204 Vasilevsky concluded. And right! Just think what it means for the shabby, demoralized, bloodless battles and

retreats of the remnants of the troops of the army groups "North" and "Center" to keep a thousand-kilometer [!] front, and even with a winding line. The prospect is not pleasant! It is clear as daylight that very soon the Russians will close the trap again.

A blow in the back to our troops from the army group "North" did not threaten. And that's why. Hitler demanded to keep the Baltics at all costs. Heinz Guderian recalled: "As a result, the thin German front west of Siauliai was broken through again in October. The Russians reached the Baltic coast in the area between Memel and Lyubava. Army Group North remained cut off from the rest of the front and from now on could only be supplied by sea transport. I began a long argument with Hitler about the withdrawal of these valuable troops necessary for the defense of Germany. These disputes did not lead to anything, they only heated up the atmosphere even more" [205]

Meanwhile, S.M. Shtemenko cites the general erroneous opinion of the Soviet command that these German troops were "a strategic foothold in the rear of our advancing fronts." "That is why," he emphasizes, "at the final stage of the struggle, the Baltic States did not leave the field of vision of the General Staff and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief." But Guderian, the best German strategist, clearly speaks of the senselessness of the withdrawal of troops from the Baltic states with the aim of striking from the territory of East Prussia. The best use of these troops would be to concentrate them on the Oder. G.K. Zhukov says the same thing: "It seemed that the high command of the German armed forces was in order to preserve their troops, to build up on a narrower front [What narrow front could there be in East Prussia? - Auth.] Defense in depth in the east and west will quickly withdraw its Army Group North, which still had about 60 divisions. However, the Hitlerite leadership did not rise above considerations of political prestige, and this brought the catastrophe closer. 206 In general, it is extremely clear that there was no reason to stop our offensive on the Vistula from a military point of view. Of great interest are the lost operational capabilities. Recall that on the Vistula, on ready-made chic bridgeheads,

there were five tank and fifteen combined arms armies

1st Ukrainian and two Belorussian fronts. At that moment, the Germans could not stop such a force. And the prospects were wide open. The already few German forces

were dispersed between the three Soviet bridgeheads - Magnushevsky, Pulawy, Sandomierz. Nothing prevented one of them from inflicting a crushing main blow, and from the rest to limit themselves to actions of a fettering nature. Since the beginning of the Belarussian operation, our troops have traveled about 700 kilometers. This is in the face of fierce enemy resistance. And in July 1944, all the reserves intended for the Eastern Front were already used up by the Germans. In order to reliably cover the Berlin direction, they would have to pull out their most combat-ready units, like the 6th SS Panzer Army from France. Guderian says clearly: "The OKH had no reserves. The only

parts available in our

12 A. Ivanovsky order, were in Romania, in the rear of the Army Group "Southern Ukraine". From one glance at the map of the railways, it was clear that their transfer anywhere would not be a quick matter. While the Germans ~~would~~ be engaged in their transfer, the Soviet tanks would have time to reach the Oder. And this meant that the war could well end five or six months earlier.

The stop of the Soviet troops on the Vistula had the most negative impact on the further course of hostilities in another important strategic direction - in East Prussia. In the book by S.M. Shtemenko on page 309 provides a map with a plan for Operation Bagration. It depicts a strike in the direction of Allenstein from the area northeast of Warsaw. Thus, the problem of East Prussia could have been successfully resolved as early as the summer of 1944. The Soviet troops advanced so rapidly that neither Gauleiter

Koch nor Gauleiter Forster had time to mobilize the population to build the infamous fortified areas, during the assault on which our troops suffered huge losses in the spring of 1945. But in August 1944, East Prussia could be taken practically with bare hands. Every doubter can read in Guderian's memoirs that then neither in Prussia nor on the Zeelovs

On the heights in front of Berlin, there were no long-term defensive lines. They were open to attack. As on the Vistula line, there were very few German troops in East Prussia. It was later, in the autumn of 1944, that powerful groups were created there, based on a system of fortified cities and fortified areas. Soviet tanks could pass from Warsaw to Allenstein in 5-6 days.

But from Allenstein to the key point of Prussia - Danzig, in general, a few kilometers. With the capture of Danzig, the East Prussian operation of the Soviet troops would have been successfully completed, which would have been an additional favorable factor for the attack on Berlin. Unfortunately, the reality turned out differently. Much worse than it could be. In October, Stalin came to his senses. A categorical order flew to the troops of

the 1st Belorussian Front: to advance on Modlin and expand the bridgeheads on the Narew River. But time has been lost. In pursuance of the order of the 47th Army of General F.I. Perkhovich tried to advance on Modlin and immediately got stuck in the enemy's defense. Things were no better for the neighboring 70th Army, which was stuck in the Serock-Pultusk section. Marshal G.K., who coordinated the actions of the front. Zhukov called the Headquarters and asked Stalin to stop the hopeless offensive. He and Rokossovsky were summoned to Moscow for a report. G.K. Zhukov recalled: "I unfolded the map and began to report.

"Comrade Zhukov," V.M. interrupted me. Molotov, - you propose to stop the offensive when the defeated enemy is not able to restrain the pressure of our troops. "The enemy has already managed to create a defense and pull up reserves," I

objected. - He is now successfully repulsing the attacks of our troops. And we bear unjustified losses. - Do you support Zhukov's opinion? asked I.V. Stalin

referring to K.K. Rokossovsky.

- Yes, I think we need to give the troops a respite and lead them after a long tension in order. "I think that

the enemy will use the respite just as well as you," said the Supreme . [208] —

Comments, as they say, are unnecessary.

Chapter

14 Trap in East Prussia

In November 1944, work began on the plan for the winter-spring campaign of 1945 at the General Staff and Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. The Red Army was given the decisive task of finally crushing fascist Germany and victoriously ending the Great Patriotic War. Therefore, large-scale offensive operations were planned in all strategic directions. The main role in the upcoming great battles was assigned to the troops of the Marshals of the Soviet Union Rokossovsky, Zhukov and Konev.

One of the most significant operations at the final stage of the war was the East Prussian Offensive. From the point of view of the Soviet command, its exceptional importance was determined by the need to ensure the successful operations of troops in the Berlin direction. AM Vasilevsky emphasized in his memoirs that the East Prussian grouping of the enemy needed to be destroyed at all costs, since its liquidation would free up significant forces for an attack on Berlin and remove the threat of a flank attack from the territory of East Prussia against the advanced armies of Zhukov and Konev.

On November 5, 1944, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front attempted to break into East Prussia from South Lithuania. But here, too, the Germans duly took advantage of the operational pause, which was mentioned above. The troops of General I.D. Chernyakhovsky immediately ran into a dense, thoroughly prepared enemy defense. Therefore, all attempts at a deep breakthrough were in vain. The headquarters gave the front command the order to go on the defensive. Moscow clearly did not expect such a powerful rebuff from the Germans. It was clear that East Prussia would have to tinker. By the end of November, the

development of the plan for the East Prussian offensive operation was basically completed. According to the plan, its overall goal was to cut off the troops of Army Group Center, defending in East Prussia [from

26

November 1945 - Army Group North], from the rest of the German armies, press them to the sea, dismember and destroy in parts, completely mastering the entire territory of this citadel of German militarism. Not only the pace of the offensive of the Red Army in the Berlin direction, but also the outcome of the Great Patriotic War as a whole depended on the successful conduct of the operation.

The task of defeating the East Prussian grouping of Germans was entrusted to the troops of the three Soviet fronts. At the first stage, the forces of the 2nd and 3rd Belorussian fronts should deliver concentric strikes in order to cut off and isolate Army Group North from the main forces of the German army. At the second stage, the East Prussian grouping was divided into several parts, their encirclement and destruction. This task was to be carried out by the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts, which received additional forces from the Stavka reserve. The 2nd Belorussian Front, after the completion of the first stage of the operation, was redirected to ensure the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front, which was advancing on Berlin. His further tasks included the capture of Marienburg, Danzig, Stettin and Kolberg, the occupation of the remaining territory of Prussia and all of Pomerania.

On November 12, 1944, at the direction of the Headquarters, a change of command was made. Marshal G.K. was appointed commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, which was to take Berlin. Zhukov. Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky moved to the post of commander of the 2nd Belorussian Front. On November 2, he received a directive from the Headquarters, which determined the tasks of the front. The main blow of the 2nd Belorussian was inflicted on Mlava in order to defeat the Pshasnysh-Mlava grouping of the enemy. It was ordered to go to the line Myshinets - Willenberg - Plock and then advance in the direction of Marienburg. The breakthrough was to be carried out by the forces of 4 combined arms, 1 tank armies and 1 tank corps from the Rozhany bridgehead. These were the 3rd Army of Colonel General AB Gorbатов, the 48th Army of Colonel General N.I. Gusev, 2nd shock army of Colonel General I.I. Fedyuninsky, 49th Army Lieutenant General I.T. Grishina, 5th Guards Tank Army, Colonel General of Tank Forces V.T. Volsky, 48th Guards Tank Corps. Auxiliary strike towards Graudenz

[Grudziadz]. and Thorn [Torun]. inflicted by the 65th Army of Colonel General P.I. Batov and the 70th Army of Colonel General BC Popov.

The Directive of the Headquarters of December 3, 1944 set tasks for the 3rd Belorussian Front. The main blow of the troops of General Chernyakhovsky was inflicted on St. Petersburg, Gumbinen, Velau in order to defeat the Tilsit-Isterburg grouping of the enemy. It was applied by the forces of 4 combined arms armies - the 39th Colonel General I.I. Lyudnikov, 5th Colonel General N.I. Krylov, 28th Lieutenant General AA Luchinsky, 11th Guards Colonel General K.N. Galitsky and two tank corps - the 1st and 2nd Guards. An auxiliary strike in the direction of Darkmen was assigned to the 2nd Guards Army, Lieutenant General P.G. Chanchibadze. In cooperation with the 3rd Belorussian, one army of the left wing of the 1st Baltic Front, the 43rd, commanded by Colonel General A.P., was to advance on Tilsit. Beloborodov. All other forces of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Baltic Fronts continued to engage in the destruction of the German group in Courland. It was still far from the final victory there, since the Germans continued to stubbornly resist in the areas of Memel, Ventspils and Liepaja.

A separate task was assigned to the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. His warships were supposed to support the actions of the fronts advancing along the sea coast and cut the enemy's sea lanes, which were used to supply German troops in East Prussia and Courland. On January 12, 1945, the thunder of artillery preparation announced the beginning of the general offensive of the Red

Army in the Berlin direction. It was the famous Vistula-Oder operation. On the very first day, our troops managed to make a breakthrough along the entire front. The German General Tippleskirch recalled: "The blow was so strong that it overturned not only the divisions of the first echelon, but also rather large mobile reserves, brought up by Hitler's categorical order very close to the front. The latter suffered losses already from the artillery preparation of the Russians, and later, as a result of a general retreat, they did not succeed at all

use according to plan"

[\[209\]](#).

On January 13, after the most powerful artillery preparation, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front went on the offensive, and on the 14th - the troops of the 2nd

Belarusian. Everywhere the German defenses were breached. By the end of January 18, in the places of our main attacks, the enemy front was crushed, large gaps appeared at the joints. Already on January 24, Rokossovsky received an order from the Stavka to concentrate the main forces for an offensive in Northern Germany, to capture Elbing and Thorn no later than February 2, cut off the enemy's all escape routes to the Oder and advance into Pomerania. Even more stunning success was achieved by the 1st Belorussian Front. On January 31, its advanced units crossed the Oder and captured a vast bridgehead in the Kinitz-Gross-Neuendorf-Refeld area. Only 70 kilometers remained to go to Berlin. It seemed that another two or three weeks of the offensive at this pace - and the war would be over.

As early as January 25, the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front had a very remarkable telephone conversation with Stalin: "With access to the Oder, you will break away from the flank of the 2nd Belorussian Front by more than 150 kilometers," said I.V. Stalin. - This cannot be done now. We must wait until the 2nd Belorussian Front completes the operation in East Prussia and regroups its forces behind the Vistula. — How long will it take?

"About ten days," Stalin added.

- The 1st Ukrainian Front will not be able to move further and provide you on the left now, as it will be busy for some time eliminating the enemy in the Oppeln [Opele] area. "Katowice..." Unlike, say, Rokossovsky or Admiral Kuznetsov,

Zhukov did not like to argue with Stalin. Orders are not discussed - they are carried out. Especially when it comes to the orders of the Supreme Commander. But in this situation, Zhukov is easy to understand. Here it is, Berlin! Only seven tens of kilometers in a straight line. In his place, not a single military leader could refuse such a tempting goal as the capital of a hostile power. Therefore, Zhukov decided not to concede: "- I ask you not to stop the advance of the troops of the front,

since then it will be more difficult for us to overcome the Mezeritsky fortified line. To secure our right flank, it is enough to strengthen the front with one more army.

The Supreme Commander promised to think about it, but we received no answer that day . "[210]

And six days later, the advanced 89th Guards Rifle Division of the 5th Shock Army of General N.E. Berzarina seized a bridgehead on the right bank of the Oder. All German attacks were repulsed with heavy losses for the enemy. The bridgehead was expanded to 44 kilometers. The way to Berlin is open. But on January 31, the Military Council of the 1st Belorussian Front sent a report to Stalin with the following content:

"1. Due to the sharp lag of the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian Front, the width of the front reached 500 km by the end of January 31. If the left flank of K. K.

Rokossovsky continues to stand still, the enemy will certainly take active steps against the extended right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front. I ask you to order K. K. Rokossovsky to immediately advance with the 70th Army in the western

direction, at least on a ledge behind the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front.

2. Tov. I.S. I ask you to oblige Konev to reach the Oder River as soon as possible.

Zhukov, Telegin"[211].

Why was the Military Council of the 1st Belorussian so worried about the state of affairs of the neighbor on the right? The fact is that to the north, in Eastern Pomerania, the Vistula Army Group was concentrated, which included the 2nd and 11th German armies, the 2nd Belorussian Front was supposed to strike at these German troops and thereby secure the right flank of the 1st Belorussian from possible enemy attacks. The flank is overstretched. And the stretched flanks more than once during the course of the war served as a source of major trouble for our troops. What was going on in East Prussia at that time? The 2nd and 3rd Belorussian fronts managed to achieve a number of operational

successes. They managed to cut Army Group North into three parts. 4

enemy divisions were pressed to the sea on the Zemland Peninsula; 5 divisions with the troops of the fortress garrison were blocked in Königsberg; up to 20 divisions of the 4th German Army were surrounded southwest of Königsberg. With the release of the 2nd Belorussian Front to the Frisches Haff Bay, the entire East Prussian grouping was cut off from the main forces of the Wehrmacht. It remained only for the liquidation of these "boilers" isolated from each other.

However, the encircled German troops relied on a network of powerful fortified areas. Since the units of the Red Army methodically squeezed the encirclement, the density of the enemy's defensive formations increased and, accordingly, his resistance increased. Therefore, our troops immediately bogged down in the German defense. The consequence of the current situation was what Zhukov reported in a report to Stalin. The main forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front, instead of advancing on Danzig and Kolberg, were pinned down by protracted battles with the German group surrounded south of Königsberg. Nothing prevented the Germans from striking the stretched right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front from Eastern Pomerania. Considering this threat, Zhukov asked Moscow: what to do? To go to Berlin or not to go? But just at the end of January, Stalin was absorbed in preparing for the Yalta Conference, where he left. The Military Council of the 1st Belorussian Front did not receive any specific instructions from him.

Temporary

Acting Chief of the General Staff AM Vasilevsky, appointed instead of A.I. Antonov, took all measures to accelerate the actions of the 2nd Belorussian Front in the direction of Pomerania. On February 8, 1945, he sent the following directive to K.K. Rokossovsky: "1. On February 10, the center and left wing of the front [212] go on the offensive

west of the Vistula River and, no later than February 20, capture the border of the mouth of the river. Vistula - Dirschau - Berent - Rummelsburg - Neustettin.

2. In the future, with the approach of the 19th Army, develop the offensive in the general direction towards Stettin, capture the area of Danzig, Gdynia and clear the coast from the enemy up to the Pomeranian Bay "[213]". At the same time, the plan of the East Prussian operation required the speedy elimination of the encircled German groups, on which

insisted the Supreme. It was clear to Vasilevsky that this task could not be solved by the forces of the 3rd Belorussian Front alone. The situation developed as he expected. On February 10, Chernyakhovsky's troops began to storm the positions occupied by the largest encircled group - the Heilsberg. The 1st Baltic Front stormed Koenigsberg and Zemland. AM Vasilevsky recalled: "The liquidation of the Heilsberg grouping began on February 10 and took place in extremely difficult conditions. The Heilsberg fortified area had over 900 reinforced concrete and many wood-and-earth defensive structures, as well as anti-tank and anti-personnel barriers. With the stubbornness of the doomed, clinging to every line, to every fortification, the Nazis tried to hold back our advance. The troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front were tired of fierce battles and suffered heavy losses. This reduced their striking power. On February 15, in a report addressed to me, K.K. Rokossovsky announced this"[214] .

So, the directive of February 8 remained on paper. The main forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front were thrown against the Heilsberg grouping. There they got stuck. But things were no better for Baghramyan either. The attacks

of the troops of the 1st Baltic Front on the Koenigsberg and Zemland directions, as expected, did not achieve their goal. On February 17, the Headquarters realized that they themselves were to blame: they should not have scattered forces in two sectors at once, but it was better to consistently smash one German grouping with all their might, then another. Therefore, Army General Bagramyan received an order to go on the defensive near Koenigsberg, concentrating the main efforts against the weaker Zemland grouping. The Stavka directive contained an order to destroy the enemy on Zemland by the end of February 27th. Bagramyan planned to launch an offensive on February 20. But the Germans gave the front commander an unexpected surprise. Having replenished the Zemland task force with troops deployed by sea from Courland, the Germans launched a surprise attack on the eve of our offensive in order to release the Koenigsberg group. An equally sudden blow followed in the opposite direction. Caught by surprise, the Soviet troops were crushed. Of course, the command took measures to prevent

connection of two enemy factions. Nevertheless, on February 21, the advanced elements of the Zemland task force connected with the vanguard of General Lasch's troops. The 1st Baltic Front now had to start all over again. On top of all the

troubles, from under the small East Prussian town of Melzak, a message came about the death of the commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front, General of the Army I.D. Chernyakhovsky. He was one of the most valiant and talented Soviet military leaders that the war itself had put forward. The loss of such a strong commander aggravated the already difficult situation in East Prussia. After the death of Chernyakhovsky, Marshal Vasilevsky took command of the front. But with his arrival near Hejlsberg, a radical change in the current situation did not happen. The liquidation of the encircled German troops was threateningly delayed. The extremely

unfavorable development of the situation in East Prussia could not but affect the actions of our troops in the Berlin direction. And without waiting for the approach of the units of the 2nd Belorussian Front, Marshal Zhukov decided to suspend further advance on Berlin. Instead of storming the capital of the Reich, the 1st Belorussian Front redirected to the north, to Eastern Pomerania. The threat of a possible strike from the Army Group "Vistula" greatly unnerved the Soviet command. Rokossovsky was able to allocate only two armies for the offensive on Pomerania - the 65th and 70th. In the first ten days, they were able to move forward only 60-70 kilometers. South of Stargard, the Germans launched a counterattack and forced the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front to retreat 12 kilometers. All this did not add optimism. On March 1, the main forces of the 1st Belorussian Front

began the preventive East Pomeranian operation. They struck at Közlin and Kolberg. Meanwhile, Rokossovsky's troops received fresh 19th Army as reinforcements and the pace of their advance increased markedly. But as in East Prussia, in Pomerania the Germans everywhere put up fierce resistance. Therefore, the fighting quickly entered into a protracted stage. The task of defeating the East Pomeranian grouping of the enemy was completed only by the end of March. After that, it took some time to put in order and replenish the exhausted, bloodless

troops. The attack on Berlin was again postponed. It started in mid-April. The struggle

also dragged on in East Prussia. AM Vasilevsky decided to temporarily stop active operations against the Zemland-Kenigsberg group. The main forces of the Soviet troops were concentrated to eliminate the Heilsberg "boiler". Two cutting strikes were planned east and southeast of Heiligenbeil. Then our troops were to begin the assault on Koenigsberg and further destroy the Zemland task force. Thus, the East Prussian operation was stretched out for an indefinite period. "But," AM Vasilevsky emphasized, "the command had no other choice."

Preparations for the operation against the Heilsberg grouping continued from February 22 to March 12. Fierce fighting went on for almost three weeks. Finally, the Heilsberg fortified area fell. Soviet troops captured 46,000 enemy soldiers and officers.

On April 6, 1945, the turn of Koenigsberg came. This city was a real long-term citadel. In addition to the ancient fortress walls and forts that retained their former strength, the Germans erected additional fortifications around Koenigsberg. Our troops were in for a bloody assault. By the end of April 8, after two days of fierce fighting, the assault

units of the Red Army occupied the entire foreground of the fortified area and came close to the walls of the fortress. AM Vasilevsky sent a proposal for surrender to the commandant of Koenigsberg, General Lash. But the Germans decided to fight. On the morning of April 9, the general assault on Koenigsberg began.

Bloody, incredibly brutal battles lasted four days. Despite heavy losses, our troops stubbornly advanced deep into the citadel. As a result, Koenigsberg was taken, 92 thousand soldiers and officers of the enemy surrendered. After the fall of Koenigsberg, the last center of resistance remained in East Prussia -

the Zemland group. On April 11, AM Vasilevsky turned to the German command with a proposal to stop the senseless resistance. IN

the appeal said: "German soldiers and officers who remained on Zemland! Now, after the fall of Königsberg, the last stronghold of German troops in East Prussia, your situation is completely hopeless. No one will help you. 450 kilometers separate you from the front line. Sea routes to the west are cut by Russian submarines. You are in the deep rear of the Russian troops. Against you are the many times superior forces of the Red Army. The Force is on our side and your resistance makes no sense. In order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, I demand from you: within 24 hours, lay down your arms, cease resistance and surrender ..."[215]. Vasilevsky's ultimatum went unanswered.

On the morning of April 13, 1945, the 3rd Belorussian Front went on the offensive. Against 8 German divisions, compressed on a narrow patch of the Zemland Peninsula, the troops of five Soviet armies acted - the 2nd and 11th Guards, 5th, 39th, and 43rd. But despite such a colossal superiority of forces, it was not possible to immediately break the resistance of the Germans. A cruel, bloody struggle went on for every piece of land. Only by the end of April 25 did our troops capture Pillau, the last German stronghold on Zemland. The

Soviet command planned to complete the East Prussian operation at the beginning of February 1945, the Berlin one at the end of February. Such terms are indicated in the operational documents of the General Staff and directives of the Headquarters. But in reality the war ended two months later. The historian has the right to ask: was there a different scenario?

Great victory in February 45th

The Berlin operation is the most obvious example of how one, given historical event can be assessed from diametrically opposed points of view. It is this picture that is created when reading the memoirs of our leading military leaders in that part of them that relates to the final stage of the Great Patriotic War. It is interesting to note that the possibility of taking Berlin in February 1945 is indeed recognized by our marshals. At the same time, the answer to the question: why the capital

Nazi Germany was not taken in February? - each of them finds in his own way. Let us turn to

the memoirs of S.M. Shtemenko. He wrote: "The need to destroy the enemy in the Baltic has become this time, the opinion of this high- [\[216\]](#). Above, the author has already cited ranking officer of the Soviet General Staff was especially sharp: the Baltic is a strategic foothold in the rear of our advancing troops, a German strike from there was a great danger, since the Germans could withdraw their grouping to East Prussia.

AM Vasilevsky thought differently. According to his estimates, the Germans really had the opportunity to strike at the rear of our troops. But such a threat did not come from the Courland, but from the East Prussian grouping of the enemy.

G.K. Zhukov did not say a word about the danger from East Prussia. He believed that the Army Group "Vistula" from Eastern Pomerania could strike at the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front advancing on Berlin.

In 1965, the memoirs of Marshal of the Soviet Union V.I. Chuikov. In the winter of forty-fifth, he commanded the 8th Guards Army, which operated in the Berlin direction. So, Chuikov quite confidently stated that "Berlin could have been mastered already in February. And this, of course, would hasten the end of the war . Chuikov's statement then caused a very lively controversy. He ~~was~~ opposed by marshals Zhukov and Konev, a whole group of former officers of the General Staff and military historians. The very fact of such a violent reaction is quite remarkable. The question is really interesting, and it should be considered in the most detailed way. As for the German grouping in Courland in the winter of 1945, there could no longer be any

questions. If the Germans intended to use it to strike at our troops from East Prussia, then, naturally, in the fall of 1944 they would have evacuated the remaining units of Army Group North from Courland and Memel. After all, even the Soviet military leaders understood that there was no point in keeping these 30 enemy divisions in the Baltic states and that they could bring more use somewhere on the Oder or Vistula lines. But the Germans

weren't going anywhere. It was very clear. Only after the fall of Memel on January 28, 1945, the remnants of the German group were evacuated by sea to East Prussia. But even up to that moment they did not pose any threat, since they were reliably pressed to the sea by our 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts. Here, a question may already arise for the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. German troops in the Baltic could only be supplied by sea. Why did the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, which had 2 battleships, 4 cruisers, dozens of destroyers, patrol boats, submarines and its own aircraft, not blockade the Courland Peninsula and Memel? With the interception of sea communications, the enemy grouping would be left without supplies and would have to capitulate. Which, in turn, would free up significant forces for the Berlin direction.

So, with the threat from German troops in the Baltics, the picture is clear. To a large extent, this was all an exaggeration. Of course, one can object: but on January 28, the Germans nevertheless withdrew their troops from there to East Prussia, thereby strengthening the grouping that threatened the rear of the 1st Belorussian Front. A.M. Vasilevsky repeatedly stressed the seriousness of this threat. However, what

happened in East Prussia at the end of January 1945? What was the situation like? Marshal Vasilevsky, with his answer to this question, literally baffles: "Until the end of January, waging the most stubborn battles, the 2nd and 3rd Belorussian fronts ... inflicted serious damage on the enemy, pressed him and captured a significant part of East Prussia. The troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front, reaching the Frisches Haff Bay, and the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front, reaching the sea north and south of Königsberg, cut off the East Prussian grouping from the rest of the Nazi forces and dismembered the troops of Army Group North that had survived the defeat. » into three parts. At the same time, the 1st Baltic Front, which provided the actions of the 3rd Belorussian Front from the north, captured the large seaport of Memel [Klaipėda] on January 28. Thus, the German fascist

command almost completely lost the ability to inflict

strikes from East Prussia against Soviet troops advancing in the direction of Berlin"[218] .

Therefore, on January 28, 1945, the problem with the East Prussian grouping of the enemy was resolved. She no longer posed a danger to the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front. And on January 31, the scout guards of Colonel H.F. Esipenko and tankers of Colonel A.N. Pashkov captured a bridgehead on the Oder. The rear of our troops was securely covered. But they did not go to Berlin.

The assault on Berlin was postponed, says G.K. Zhukov, in view of the threat of a German strike from Eastern Pomerania. What was the East Pomeranian group? It included the 2nd and 11th German armies. In addition, in the interfluvium of the Vistula and Oder, in the Stettin area, units of the 3rd tank army of the enemy operated. Therefore, if our troops started advancing on Berlin, they would immediately be attacked by a flank attack by three German armies. So, first it was necessary to eliminate this threat from the flank, and only then proceed to the Berlin operation. Everything seems to be correct. But how

then to understand the following episode, described by Marshal Zhukov: "In order to protect the main forces of the front advancing towards the Oder from possible enemy attacks from Eastern Pomerania, it was decided to deploy the front to the north of the 3rd shock army, the 1st army. The troops of the Polish, 47th, 61st armies and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps ... According to our calculations, before the troops of the front reached the Oder, the enemy could not organize a counterattack from Pomerania, and in case of serious danger, we could still have time to regroup part of the troops from the Oder to defeat the Pomeranian group"[219] . It was about—

this that V.I. Chuikov in his "scandalous" memoirs. For the attack on Berlin in February 1945, the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts could contribute enough forces, despite the threat from Pomerania. This threat was blocked by a barrier of 4 combined arms armies and 1 cavalry corps. But the Germans would not have been able to redirect their three armies for a concentrated flank attack. If they had removed the Vistula army group from their positions, then the German front in front of Rokossovsky's troops would have been exposed. While the same 2nd and 11th German armies stood still, they successfully held back the 65th and 70th armies of the 2nd Belorussian Front. Otherwise, the East Pomeranian grouping, without

doubts, threatened blow from the rear. This is clearly stated in Chuikov's memoirs: "If we objectively assess the strength of the grouping of Nazi troops in Pomerania, then we will be convinced that any threat from them to our strike group in the Berlin direction could well be localized by the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front"[220] . Actually, that's why the Germans did not dare to deliver this notorious flank attack. Hitting the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front and at the same time holding back the 2nd Belorussian Front with the forces of only

three armies is clearly an unrealistic task. Emphasizing the reality of such a plan of the German command, G.K. Zhukov refers to the memoirs of General Guderian. What did the chief of the German General Staff write about the strike from Eastern Pomerania? Firstly, Heinz Guderian waged a grueling struggle with Hitler for more than a month to force him to remove the completely incompetent SS Reichsführer Himmler from the post of commander of the Vistula Army Group and replace him with an experienced General Wenck. Himmler was not engaged in the affairs of the troops subordinate to him, but in party intrigues and rather dark negotiations with the Western allies. Secondly, Guderian says nothing about any real plan for an attack from Pomerania. In his book, we are talking about a counter-offensive with the aim of eliminating the Russian bridgehead on the Oder. This operation was supposed to be carried out by delivering flank attacks from the south, from the Glogau-Guben region and from the north, from the Arnswalde region. Such an operation really began on February 16, 1945. The 3rd Panzer Army of Colonel-General Rauss was involved in it, without which the East Pomeranian group could not take a single step

at all. This German offensive in itself disproved all arguments about a blow from Pomerania. IN AND. Chuikov wrote: "As for the risk, you often have to take it. But in this case, the risk was well justified. In the Vistula-Oder operation, our troops have already traveled over 500 kilometers, and only 60–80 kilometers remained from the Oder to Berlin . Commenting on this statement by Chuikov, G.K. Zhukov noted: "Of course, one could ignore this danger, let both tank armies and 3-4 combined arms armies go straight to Berlin and approach

would have been our cover, would have gone to the crossings on the Oder and would have put the troops of the front in the Berlin area in an extremely difficult situation. But four combined-arms armies were assigned to this very cover. Besides, would the warriors of the heroic 3rd shock or the cavalry guards allow the enemy to easily break through? What is the basis of this, frankly, not too flattering opinion of the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front about his own soldiers. After all, they repelled the German offensive on the Oder bridgehead with much smaller forces!

It is impossible not to notice that the situation in January-February 1945 in the Berlin direction showed great similarity with November 1942-January 1943 in the Stalingrad area. Then the Soviet command faced a similar dilemma: to deliver a decisive blow to Rostov, or first to deal with the liquidation of the encircled German troops? Two years later, history essentially repeated itself.

Let us recall the conversation between Stalin and Zhukov on January 25, 1945. The Supreme Commander then said: "We must wait until the 2nd Belorussian Front completes the operation in East Prussia and regroups its

forces behind the Vistula." And here is what Stalin said to Vasilevsky on November 26, 1942: "At the end of the conversation, I.V. Stalin pointed out that at this time the main task was to quickly liquidate the encircled group of Germans. This will free our troops occupied in it to carry out other tasks for the final defeat of the enemy on our Southern Front. The

same mistakes of Stalin led to the same consequences. Both the army of Paulus and the armies of the "North" group in East Prussia relied on powerful defensive lines. Therefore, in both cases, the actions to eliminate the encircled enemy troops inevitably dragged on. A.M. Vasilevsky recalled how the assault on the positions of the 6th Army was progressing: "Following the instructions of the Headquarters, in the first days of December we again tried to dismember and destroy the encircled group. However, this time too, no significant results were achieved. The enemy, relying on a network of well-prepared engineering structures, fiercely resisted, responding with fierce counterattacks to each of our

an attempt to advance"[224]. Exactly the same thing happened in East Prussia: "The actions of our troops took on a very tense and rather protracted character. Overcoming one defensive position after another, they slowly moved forward, trying to split the Heijlsberg grouping into parts, but did not have the desired success .

As a result, the 2nd Belorussian Front got stuck in East Prussia, as at one time the Donskoy in the Stalingrad region under the command of the same Rokossovsky. And the same Zhukov proposed to turn the 1st Belorussian Front instead of Berlin to Pomerania against the German flank grouping, as near Stalingrad he turned the Southwestern Front instead of Rostov to Tormosin and Morozovsk against Manstein's troops.

The coincidence was manifested even in the tasks assigned by the German command to the encircled groups. Let's compare two quotes from the memoirs of G.K. Zhukov and A.M. Vasilevsky.

"After the complete failure of attempts to deblockade, the Hitlerite military-political leadership saw the main task no longer in saving their troops surrounded and doomed to death, but in making them fight longer in encirclement, to tie down Soviet troops. They needed to win maximum time for the withdrawal of their troops from the Caucasus and the transfer of forces from other fronts to create a new front capable of stopping our offensive to some extent .

"We learned that the German troops operating in East Prussia were given the task of stubbornly defending the areas they occupied in order to pin down Soviet troops here for as long as possible and prevent their transfer to the Berlin direction"[227] .

Thus, the enemy prepared a trap for the Soviet troops in East Prussia. And they got into it. Not to mention the fact that all the failures during the East Prussian operation were the fruits of the stoppage of the offensive on the Vistula line in July 1944.

Here is what Heinz Guderian wrote about the state of the German defense in the summer of 1944: "Neither in the east nor in the west, no one prepared any defensive positions ... Something had to be done, otherwise each local defeat required a retreat along the entire front. As I had already told Hitler in January, it seemed to me important first of all to restore the old German frontier fortifications. Then it was necessary to fortify the sections connecting these fortifications with each other and with the main lines of the rivers ... One way or another, but the construction of fortifications began. Earthworks were carried out by volunteers - women, children and the elderly. The Hitler Youth made a particularly large contribution ... Over time, we will be able to appreciate the defense of Königsberg and Danzig, Glogau and Breslau; it is now impossible to determine how much faster the Russians would have advanced and how much more German territory would have been in their hands if these German fortifications had not been built. But our army had a very real opportunity to prevent the—

Germans from building these fortifications! Okay, it's clear with Warsaw, there was politics there. But even Churchill did not object to the liquidation of Prussia as a state. No political considerations in this case could not be an obstacle.

But let's go back to February 1945. By that time, the main thing had been done: the East Prussian grouping had been cut into three parts, pressed to the sea, and thereby rendered harmless. Just like the army of Paulus at Stalingrad. Army Group North could not break through anywhere, and no one set such tasks for it. And if the question of its elimination was so important, then it is absolutely clear that with the capture of Berlin, this issue was resolved automatically.

So, could the storming of Berlin take place in February 1945? Undoubtedly! There can be no doubt about this. Moreover, there was no talk of a bloody assault that took place in April. The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front could capture Berlin on the move, while losing much fewer people and equipment. Proof of this is the competent opinion of G.K. Zhukova: "In the future [after forcing the Oder. - Auth.] it was supposed to develop a rapid offensive in the Berlin direction, concentrating the main efforts around Berlin from the northwest.

On January 27, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command approved this offer.

On January 28, a similar proposal was sent to the Headquarters by the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev. It boiled down to defeating the Breslav grouping of the enemy and reaching the Elbe by February 25-28, and taking Berlin by the right wing of the front in cooperation with the 1st Belorussian Front. This proposal was approved by the

Stavka on 29 January. Indeed, according to V.I.

Chuikov, at that time the enemy on the outskirts of Berlin had limited forces and his defense was rather weak. It was clear to us. In this regard, the front command gave the troops an orientation. "The orientation, among other things, said: [\[229\]](#).

"1. The enemy in front of the 1st Belorussian Front or does not have large counterattack groups.

2. The enemy does not have a continuous front of defense either. It is now covering certain areas and is trying to solve the problem of defense by active operations in a number of sectors. We have

preliminary information that the enemy has withdrawn four tank divisions and up to 5-6 infantry divisions from the Western Front, and that these units are being transferred to the Eastern Front. At the same time, it continues to transfer units from the Baltic states and East Prussia. Apparently, in the next 6-7 days, the

enemy will concentrate troops brought from the Baltic states and East Prussia on the Schwedt-Stargard-Neustettin line in order to cover Pomerania, prevent us from reaching Stettin and prevent our access to the Pomeranian Bay. The enemy, apparently, is concentrating the group of troops being transferred from the west in the

area of Berlin with the task of defending the approaches to Berlin.

2. The tasks of the troops of the front are to consolidate the success achieved by active actions in the coming days, pull up everything that is lagging behind, replenish stocks up to 2 fuel refueling, up to 2 ammunition loads and take Berlin with a swift throw on February 15–16^[230] .

The idea of the brilliant Byelorussian operation was formulated in approximately the same way: to attack swiftly, not to give the enemy a respite, the opportunity to gain a foothold on new lines of defense and to bring up reserves. Assuming a threat from the East Pomeranian grouping, the command of the 1st Belorussian Front reinforced the combined arms armies of the barrier with the 2nd Guards Tank Army. Surely such strength was not enough to wring the neck of the army group "Vistula"? Then it was necessary to continue the offensive on Berlin and take it.

G.K. Zhukov claims that in February his front had nothing to attack Berlin with. Of the eight combined arms and two tank armies, only four incomplete armies remained in the Berlin direction - the 5th shock, half of the 8th guards, the 69th and 33rd. Others turned to Pomerania. But after all, it was possible to transfer part of the forces from the 1st Ukrainian Front to the 1st Belorussian Front. G.K. Zhukov recognizes this possibility. But Marshal Konev could not allocate any troops to him. Almost the entire February, the 1st

Ukrainian Front was engaged in the assault on Breslau. This city, as we remember from Guderian's memoirs, was fortified to glory. According to Zhukov, the main forces of the 1st Ukrainian - 4 combined arms, 2 tank and 1 air armies were drawn into his assault. Isn't it too much for some Breslau? Well, if this city is so heavily fortified, wouldn't it be better to bypass it? For example, when the extremely strong fortress of Poznan stood in the way of the 1st Belorussian Front, they did not storm it with all their might, but simply bypassed it, leaving part of the forces to blockade the garrison. What prevented Konev from doing the same? Why did he need to storm Breslau if the main forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front were needed to rush to Berlin? While the troops of Marshal Zhukov were engaged in the

liquidation of the Vistula Army Group, and the troops of Marshal Konev stormed Breslau and then

they simply stood on the left bank of the Neisse River, the Germans erected powerful fortifications on the Seelow Heights and in Berlin itself. Hitler during this time formed a new army to protect the capital - the 11th - under the command of SS-Obergruppenführer Felix Steiner. That is why the assault and capture of Berlin in April 1945 cost our troops such a high price.

History has no subjunctive mood. But its course can be really influenced by the thoughts and actions of a person. Therefore, it is so painful to think about the lost victories. It hurts so much to realize how many soldiers' lives could have been saved if the war had ended two months earlier. And the Great Victory could well have been achieved in February 1945.

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Record dated February 9, 1944

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Record dated February 13, 1944

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Record dated February 7, 1944

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2nd Shock Army, 65th,
49th, 70th
Armies, 8th Guards Tank Corps,
8th Mechanized Corps, 3rd
Guards Cavalry Corps and at least four breakthrough artillery
divisions

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